PO Harry Neal 47176 RAF

Harry was born in 1919 in Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire, the son of Police Supt John Morbey Neal and Bessie Eveline Neal nee Reed.

Aged 15, Harry joined the RAF as an Aircraft Apprentice and showed a natural aptitude for the engineering side of aviation, quickly gaining the rank of Sgt Fitter. After war was declared, Harry was desperate to become aircrew, and in the summer of 1941 he finally gained his pilot's wings. In October 1941 he received his commission.

On 1 April 1942, 12 aircraft from 107 Sqn were detailed to attack an armed Merchantman at Boulogne Docks. At 12:09 Harry and his crew departed RAF Great Massingham, Norfolk in Boston III W8387. Weather over the target area was poor and the bombs, dropped from 14,000 feet at 13:15, hit the town East of the Docks. Very heavy flak was reported in the target area and the last 3 aircraft, including Harrys, were badly hit. Despite his best efforts, Harry was forced to ditch in the English Channel off Dover where the aircraft collapsed. The other 2 crew members survived and were picked up by a Royal Navy Vessel. Sadly, Harry was killed on impact and his body was recovered for burial.

In a letter from the Observer to Harry's father, the bravery and tenacity of Harry was revealed:

"Please tell Supt Neal that it was only the courage and tenacity of his son which got myself and rear gunner home to be free men in England today..... we owe our lives and safety to his son. He always told us that so long as his plane could fly he would get us home, and he kept his word. His one thought was the safety of his crew. God bless him."

Harry is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey

Harry is commemorated on Wall Panel 217